

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02
SS-15 ICA-11 HA-05 EB-08 COME-00 TRSE-00 OMB-01
LAB-04 SIL-01 /108 W
-----114991 180624Z /21

R 170830Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2146
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
INFO AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMEMBASSY GABORONE
AMEMBASSY LILONGWE
AMEMBASSY LAGOS
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
AMCONSUL DURBAN

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE PRETORIA 4772

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, PDEV, PINS, ELAB, RH
SUBJECT: RHODESIA: MINERS STRIKE LEAVES FOUR DEAD

1. PRESS ACCOUNTS OF AUGUST 16 STATE THAT MINERS AT THE MANGULA COPPERMINE, 130 KILOMETERS NORTHWEST OF SALISBURY, WENT ON STRIKE ON AUGUST 14 OVER A WAGE DISPUTE. THE MINE IS OWNED BY THE SOUTH AFRICA MESSINA DEVELOPMENT LIMITED GROUP AND IS THE LARGEST COPPER PRODUCER IN RHODESIA. REPORTEDLY THE ENTIRE FORCE OF 3,000 MEN WENT ON STRIKE THE FIRST DAY AND DISPERSED QUIETLY AFTER BEING ADDRESSED BY THE NATIONAL INDUSTRIAL COUNCIL SPOKESMAN. ON THE SECOND MORNING ABOUT HALF THE MINERS GATHERED CARRYING AXES AND CLUBS. POLICE REPORTEDLY ATTEMPTED TO DISPERSE THE CROWD WITH TEARGAS.
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TWO POLICEMEN WERE APPARENTLY ATTACKED BY THE CROWD AND THEIR COLLEAGUES OPENED FIRE, KILLING FOUR MINERS AND WOUNDING FIVE OTHERS.

2. A MINE SPOKESMAN WAS QUOTED AS SAYING THE SITUATION WAS NOW CALM AND HE EXPECTED AN EARLY RETURN TO WORK. HE ADDED THAT A WAGE INCREASE HAD BEEN GRANTED BUT THE MINERS

WANTED A 100 PERCENT RAISE "AND THIS WAS OUT OF THE QUESTION".

3. EMBOFF CONTACTED CHAMBER OF COMMERCE SOURCE IN SALISBURY WHO CONFIRMED BASICS OF PRESS ACCOUNT. HE SAID THAT THE GRIEVANCE CAME AFTER THE DROPPING OF WAGE RESTRAINT REGULATIONS IN LATE JUNE AND THE EXAGGERATED EXPECTATIONS BY MINERS THAT THEY WOULD RECEIVE A SUBSTANTIAL WAGE INCREASE. SOURCE SAID INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS HAVE BEEN REMARKABLY GOOD IN THE PAST BUT THAT, "LIKE IN SOUTH AFRICA", RATES OF PAY ARE LOW IN CERTAIN CATEGORIES AND LEGITIMATE GRIEVANCES EXISTED. THE ACROSS-THE-BOARD WAGE AWARD APPARENTLY DID NOT MEET WITH THE DESIRES OF SOME ELEMENTS. HE SAID THAT THE STRIKE STARTED OUT PEACEFULLY ON THE FIRST DAY AND, WHILE HE COULD NOT IDENTIFY THE PERSONS, CERTAIN ELEMENTS SEEMED TO HAVE TURNED IT INTO A "SEMI-POLITICAL" PROTEST. HE SAID THE VIOLENCE SEEMED TO HAVE BEEN AN "OVER REACTION" ON THE PART OF THE POLICE. HE ADDED THAT THIS WAS A UNIQUE AND UNPRECEDENTED INCIDENT IN LABOR RELATIONS IN RHODESIA BUT COULD NOT SPECULATE ON ITS MEANING FOR FUTURE LABOR/MANAGEMENT RELATIONS, PARTICULARLY IN THE PRESENT UNSETTLED POLITICAL CLIMATE. EDMONDSON

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